

[Clifton Bonner]

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FOLKSTUFF - RANGELORE

Phipps,[Woody?]

[Rangelore?]

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Clifton Bonner, 67, was born in Faro, Ark. Bonner left his home when he was 20, to see the world. [When?] he reached Childress, Tex. he was broke and had to beg for a meal. The Horseshoe Nails Ranch was short of cowboys, and Ed Smith, the foreman of the ranch, promised Bonner a job if he learned to ride horses in a month. [This?] was just what Bonner wanted, and he learned in the set time, then was given a job. He quit the range in '95, to prospect for minerals, which occupation he follows today, and when in Fort Worth, Texas, he resides at 3215 Elm St. His story:

"Yes sir! I've rode a many a broom tail on the range. While the fences were getting a good start at that time, still, there was a lot of open spaces then. I wasn't really born on it, but I got on it back in '91. I was really born in [Faro?], [Ark.?], and came to [Texas?] on my way around the world. I still can't tell you why I got way out to Childress, Texas, but there's where I was when my little old wad played out, and I had to wash dishes for my meals in a little old apple pie joint there.

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"I got my break one day when the cow punchers from off the Hossshoe Nails Ranch come in to make whoopee. While I was waiting on the foremen, he asked the boss if he knowed where he could get some hands. He said, 'Sure! There's a mighty good man just a-sp'iling for a job!'

"[The?] foremen, his name was Ed Smith I found out later, he looked me over, and said, 'You never rode a hoss in your life, did you?'

"I wanted a job so bad I was willing to try anything, so I says, I never yet saw the thing I couldn't do partly, that somebody else could do. Just give me a go, and I'll show you that I'll ride anything you got in a couple of days.'

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" The boss and Ed Smith just roared and a couple of other cow punchers that were in there at the same time, bent nigh on to double, a-laughing at me, but the foreman ended up by saying, 'Well podner, we'll give you your change. If you'll learn to ride them there broom tails we got out there in the corral, in less than a month, I'll put you on the pay roll.'

" That was an good as I wanted, and when the gang left, I rode up behind one, then another, as they got tired of carrying me. By the time we got to the ranch, my setter was so sore that they give me some chores to do to for a couple of days, then bright and early one morning, Ed Smith [called?] me out to the [corral?], and showed me a hoss all bridled and saddled. He says, ' Ride her, kid, and you've got a job.'

" I wasn't a bit scared of the nag [because?] I'd never seen anybody throwed before. I climbed into that saddle just like I'd been [born?] to it, and I don't guess I'd left the ground a half a minute 'til I was on it again, flat of my back. Well, for a couple of hours there, I was on again, off again, [Flannigan?].

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“ The whole time, the boys were all around the corral, and laughed themselves plum sore at me. Ed finally let me quit, and I crawled off to the corral. I really walked, alright, but I'd have felt a sight better if [?] have got down and crawled.

“ The next day was the same thing over again, only I got a little better. It was high time I was getting better, because I'd rubbed a lot of skin off me, trying to ride that broom tail. In a couple of weeks, [?] got so's I could ride that nag, then they shifted another to me that was a little meaner. Then, when I got that one, they gave me another, 'til In less than the month's time, I rode 3 every [broom?] tail there was on the place except the wild ones they had shipped in from the South.on the Denver. You see, all the native wild ones had been caught up by that time, and these wild ones were caught in the sage South of [San?] [Antonio?].

“ [Even?] after I learned to ride them broom tails, I still got throwed a couple of times. [?] little old 500 pound mule that was supposed to be so lazy you had to prod it to get it to move, throwed me clean over a little old mesquite tree. Clean over, and all the boys gave me the hoss laugh about it.

“ [Another?] hoss so old that he was about to be shot for not being able to carry a man, throwed me and nigh onto broke me left arm. You see, the catch was that he used to be abad one, and his name was even ' Dynamite.' I wasn't thinking about him being able to pitch, and wasn't ready for anything. Some little old something or other scared him, and up I went.

“ I was sure proud [when?] [?] let me go otu to the herd and help around. [The?] gang had just begun the Spring roundup, and I was put to riding herd. I can't recall the [words?] we used, but, why, we sang to them cows. Yes sir! Sang to them as we rode around at night. Just most anything would do, but we done that to quiet the herd so's they'd stay down when they [beaded?].

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"I never did know just how many head the ranch run, but it must have been a-plenty because in one year, they shipped four [train?] loads of beef to Montana, and I couldn't see as they'd made much of a dent in the cattle on the ranch.

" The ranch was owned yb old Judge Ellison, a big monied man that lived in Fort Worth and came up to the ranch about every six weeks. His brand, the ' Hossshoe Nails, was made like this:

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FC . [There's?] nothing to be seen of the old ranch now, as its all cut up into farms now.

' [?] had plenty of trouble on the place, with the stampedes, fence cuttings, and water hole poisonings.

" You could expect a stampede any time you had a herd rounded up, because any little old thing would put them to running with all their might. Just to give you an example, [?] [?] went to Denton, and brought back what they called, ' a herd of Eastern Dogies.' Called Eastern because they came from what was then called 'East Texas,' by the folks that live in West Texas. These Eastern dogies [would?] stampede quicker'n the dogies we were used to, and a little old wolf come up to the herd, and that herd just run lickity split for no where fast. I [reckon?] it took us almost a week to catch it up again, and got it started on to [?] where we'd started with it in the first place.

" The fence cuttings come off because there were still ranchers [that?] felt like the range ought to stay open, and they'd sure cut a fence down when you stuck it up.

The water hole poisonings come off when some of the small fry ranchers, or nesters, thought old Judge Ellison was getting too powerful or something, and they'd poison a hole. [?] cost the old judge a sight of money every time they done that, but they'd get caught up before they done much more damage when they started on a [rampage?] like that.

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[The?] man that generally took the slack up out of their ropes when they started on one of then rampages, was old Ed Smith. [He?] was one of them there now, ' champeen riders and gun shots.' 5 I never saw him in action, but only knowed what the rest of the boys said, and they said he could draw and shoot quicker'n you could wink your eye. He was that fast. They said that back in '85, a rustler gang led by ' The Big Wolf,' raided the Hossshoe Nails, and Ed happened to be close by when they done.it. He didn't have no time to go and got help, so jumped the gang up by hisself. He went ahead of the herd, and when they started past an arroyo, he was in it, and shot six rustlers before the rest of the gang run off, thinking there were more men there then just old Ed hisself. I'd sure like to have been close by and looking on when [all?] that come off. Just [looking?] on, though, and not in on it.

“ I do know this, though, and old Ed forked a broom tail nobody else could [touch?]. That hoss wouldn't let anybody else get straightened out in the saddle before he upped them. He wasn't a killer, but he just didn't allow any messing around by the boys. They tell me that [?] made quite a bit of money, betting riders that they couldn't stay on his nag. They'd see him come into town onit, and maybe get interested. He'd see they were interested, and angle them into some sorta bet.

The best cutting hoss belonged to Rufe [Ballett?] hisself. He brought the hoss with him when he hired out the season before I come to the Hossshoe Nails. Just watching that hoss work proved that if a man had a good cutting hoss like that, he didn't have much else to do at branding time but show the critter he wanted, to the hoss, and that hoss would put it out of the herd in jig time. Another real important thing, is the timing in the roping. Your [hoss?] has to learn just when to set down on his uppers after you cast 6 your lasso. If he had any sense a-tall, he'd soon learn that when he sat down too soon, the roped critter'd jerk him over, and if he didn't sat [down?] soon enough, the critter'd drag him on.

“ Rufe had such a good cutter hisself, that Ed put him to busting and training all the stuff used on the Hossshoe Nails. He sure done some pretty work, and many's the time I've let

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work go just to watch him do his stuff. I'd a heap druther watch him then any of these here rodeoers, because he didn't do anything for show, but he put it over in a workman like way.

I quit the Hossshoe Nails just before the Spring roundup in '95, and went to Fort Worth. Not long after that, I left Fort [Worth?] to prospect, and been a-doing it every since. I can tell you a-plenty about minerals right now, and right around Fort Worth here, there's going to be a mighty big surprise some day.